

THE WASHINGTON POST
3 November 1975

Ford Fires Schlesinger, Colby

Jackson Blasts Kissinger Role In the Shake-Up

By George Lardner Jr.

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President Ford has fired James R. Schlesinger as Secretary of Defense and William E. Colby as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, The Washington Post was told last night.

The President personally talked to both officials yesterday morning before flying to Jacksonville, Fla., where he met with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, The Post learned.

There also were reports that George Bush, the U.S. representative in Peking, will replace Colby, and that Donald H. Rumsfeld, White House chief of staff, will take over Schlesinger's job.

Sharply critical of the Schlesinger ouster, Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) said last night that differences with Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger were to blame.

"The last vestige of dissent may be wiped out," Jackson said. "Dissent to Dr. Kissinger, I mean."

It was learned earlier in the day, following a report in Newsweek magazine, that Kissinger is expected to give up his second administration job as President Ford's national security adviser and that the post will go to Kissinger's loyal deputy, Air Force Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft.

However, Jackson, a high-ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said he was sure the plan for Kissinger to relinquish his National Security Council post was just "a sop."

Jackson made it clear that he thought Kissinger had won out in a power struggle. An informed administration official described the changeover in the NSC post — from Kissinger to Scowcroft — as more symbolic than real. Scowcroft has been serving as day-to-day director of the NSC staff and is viewed by many as Kissinger's loyal alter ego.

Chairman John L. McClellan (D-Ark.) of the Senate Appropriations Committee, an ally of Schlesinger on the need for a strong military and a high peacetime military budget, attributed Schlesinger's firing to friction with Kissinger, declaring: "I think they're giving Kissinger too much power down at the White House."

Schlesinger, 46, who was named Secretary of Defense by President Nixon in 1973 following a brief stint as CIA director, could not be reached for comment. Sources said he had been offered another post in the administration but that he was not likely to take it.

The President and his key advisers were in Jacksonville, Fla., where press secretary Ron Nessen repeatedly said he had no information on the reports.

The National Broadcasting Co. said it understood a formal announcement on the developments was to be made in 24 hours.

Jackson said he learned "from reliable sources" that the decision concerning Schlesinger had already been made, but Jackson speculated that "it may be reversed" if a stiff reaction developed. But as of last night, he said he had no doubt that "it's a fait accompli."

In a brief statement that he jotted down at his home and expanded in a telephone interview, Jackson charged that Schlesinger's departure was prompted "by an accumulation of things" such as disagreements with Kissinger over strategic arms limitation talks, the budget, U.S. intelligence-gathering and how to handle it.

Jackson said he felt that Schlesinger, in effect, forced the decision by refusing to cave in to Kissinger.

"If anyone really made the decision, it was Schlesinger," Jackson said. "But this is going to make it

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